

Dawning

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Summary: Roy goes through detox and has conversations with and about key people in his life. This is the second part of a three-part saga called Illumination about Roy coming clean.

Dawning

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"Thanks for coming so quickly, guys." Robin was sitting in the same chair he had been sitting in when Roy finally seceded that he needed help. He knew he wore an exceptionally grim expression, which would concern his friends, but he figured it's better to give them some kind of warning. Wonder Girl, Aqualad, and Kid Flash were sitting around their leader watching for signs of why they were called to the Lair.

Robin was about to speak when Wonder Girl protested, "We're not all here, Robin. Speedy's not here yet."

"Makes you wonder how he got his name," Kid Flash mumbled.

Robin shot Kid Flash a glare, and started, "Actually Speedy's the reason I called you here. He's in the hospital."

The others gasped, and Wonder Girl spoke first, "Why? What happened? Did his shoulder go bad? I thought Zatanna healed it." Her concern was apparent.

Robin thought a moment. He had run this moment over and over in his mind, but he still didn't know how to break the news to his teammates. He felt tears glisten his eyes as he looked into Wonder Girl's. He said quietly, "He's in detox."

Robin broke the gaze he held with Wonder Girl and looked at the others. Kid Flash had a look of pure shock, while Aqualad's expression was a little more complex. His shock was mixed with more

concern and a little confusion, and he said, "Detox? You mean from drugs?"

Nodding, Robin said, "Yeah, he had been using heroin for about 4 months. I was first suspicious

a few weeks ago. Remember when he missed those arrows? And that's why I didn't want him to leave after he got shot. I wanted to see if withdrawal symptoms showed up. They did."

"My God," Wonder Girl whispered, "Why didn't I see it? I should have seen it."

"We all should have," Aqualad agreed.

"It's not that easy to catch, guys," Robin said. "Especially when it's someone close. I only caught it because I see it every night with Batman, and I've been taught to notice details like that. When someone's as close to you as Speedy is to us, it's real easy to just assume he's having a bad day." Last thing he wanted was for Speedy's friends to spend energy beating themselves up about not catching it. Speedy will need that energy. "He's in for a rough time, guys. We need to be there for him. He's in something called rapid detox now. It's a fairly new procedure that Bruce knows about. It means he'll probably be home tonight, and he'll need us. Ollie threw him out, so it's been arranged that he'll stay with Black Canary."

"I knew it!" Wonder Girl began to cry, "It's all Green Arrow's fault! He shouldn't leave Speedy alone like he does!"

"I know how you feel, Wonder Girl, but we can't waste energy blaming Green Arrow. " At the sight of Wonder Girl's tears, Robin felt his own well up, " What's done is done, and we'll need that energy to help Speedy undo it. When he comes home tonight he's going to be pretty sick, and he's probably going to be more irritable than usual. Bruce says that he should get visibly stronger each day. Although the physical cravings for drugs won't be there, we have to make sure he's occupied and always has one of us with him, so he sees that he doesn't need to turn to the drugs."

Robin surveyed his team again, and noticed that Kid Flash's shock had seemed to turn at least partially to anger. Robin paused a moment, and the silent question he posed to Kid Flash caused the speedster to burst in anger, "What was he thinking?! Speedy never thought stuff through, but drugs?!! "

"Wally!" Wonder Girl cried.

"No! I mean it! It's stupid!! We grow up learning how bad it is. I think we've all seen it first hand on the street, and he does it himself?! How stupid can he be?!!"

Wonder Girl started to cry in response to Kid Flash's anger, and Garth looked quietly at the floor, as if embarrassed at his friend's rage. Robin answered, "I know how you feel, Wally, and you're right. It was stupid. But it was a mistake. A really horrible mistake, but a mistake nonetheless. He's getting help now, and I'm confident with our help he can come clean and stay clean. But I think he'll need all of our help. You in?" The words were said to Wally, but Robin looked at the others too.

"I'm in," Garth committed quietly.

"Me too. For whatever he needs." Wonder Girl vowed through her tears. She looked expectantly at Wally, and Garth and Dick followed her gaze to the speedster.

Wally met their gaze shaking his head, tears forming through his anger. He knew what he should say, but he couldn't get over his animosity. He looked at the floor and said quietly, "I dunno, guys. I'll try."

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Dinah was sitting by Roy's bedside. She insisted on staying with him during the rapid detox process even though he was anesthetized. The hospital staff had initially protested; allowing visitors wasn't normal procedure, and she wasn't even Roy's mother. But even here in New York, Bruce Wayne's influence held sway, and, although he didn't admit to using it, Dinah was sure he had used it here.

Rapid detox was Wayne's idea. He kept up with the latest procedures for coming clean, and he said that by far this was the best way, purging all physical cravings for the illicit drug. The technique was so new that he had to find a hospital willing to perform the procedure, and he had to provide documentation on the technique. Bruce did find a doctor by the name of Michael Heberlein who was familiar with the procedure. Dr. Heberlein insisted on waiting until Roy's shoulder was healed, so Bruce asked Zatanna, a teammate with magical powers, to heal it. Bruce allowed Dr. Heberlein to assume that he had used his wealth to pay Zatanna for her services, when in fact she had done it as a favor. He had asked her to heal the wound, but to allow a lingering soreness to remain to remind Roy of his irresponsibility. Knowing the financially hard times that had come upon Ollie, Wayne insisted on paying for the procedure. He said that it was the way he could help Roy. Dinah knew that Bruce was probably feeling some of the same guilt she was.

Hal was at JLA headquarters briefing the rest of the team, so Dinah was alone with the teen. She was watching his still form, going through, as she had been doing since Roy told her and Hal a few days ago, all the things she could have done to save Roy from this pain. She had never wanted to be a mother, yet she was the closest thing to a mother the boy lying before her had. She had brought herself to tears when she heard shouting in the corridor outside, "I'm the boy's guardian! Let me go!!" Dinah wiped her tears away, and went to the commotion.

"Oliver Queen, keep your voice down!" Dinah scolded her lover. "I'll take care of him," Dinah told the nurse Oliver had been arguing with and the nurse threw up her hands and walked away. Dinah took the nurse's place standing directly in front of the elder archer. "Are you sure you're his guardian?" She hissed. "From what I've heard, you weren't much of one a few days ago."

"I've done everything I could for that kid. It's not my fault he can't keep his head on straight." Oliver shot back, managing to lower his voice.

"Some might argue with that, Oliver. I thank God for Dick Grayson and

the rest of Roy's friends, or else the 'kid' might already be dead." Dinah's eyes narrowed, and tears came unbidden. "Come here, Oliver, and you tell me how he's doing." She lead Oliver into Roy's room. The archer hesitated before he followed Dinah into the room, and laid his eyes on his ward. Although he wanted to, he couldn't keep eye contact which resulted in his looking to and from the teen.

Finally, he was able to keep his eyes on Roy, and he sat weakly in the chair Dinah had been sitting in. His ward--his son--was so still. Oliver looked at the beeping monitors that were supporting his son's life. He could tell that Roy was not breathing on his own, and he had a tube down his throat. He hadn't even been present when Zatanna healed Roy's wound which Roy had received when Oliver was out of town. Oliver put his elbows on his knees and put his face in his hands. He couldn't watch anymore. "Oh, God, Dinah, what have I done?"

Dinah answered quietly, "You've turned away a boy's love, and ignored his need for love. You've left him alone so that he had to turn to something else for comfort." She stepped behind him, and laid her hand on his shoulder, her eyes going to the unconscious teen. "But we didn't stop you, Ollie. We're all at fault. When you left town, I should have made sure Roy was ok. I should have done a whole lot more." Dinah tears started to flow again, and Ollie stood and twisted to envelope Dinah in an embrace.

While still embraced, Ollie's own tears started and he confessed into Dinah's shoulder, "I can't do this, Dinah. I'm not strong enough."

Dinah pulled apart the embrace just enough to look into Oliver's eyes. She couldn't stop her voice from having a touch of contempt. "You don't have to, Oliver. Hal and I have committed to helping Roy through this whole thing. But it would be nice if you were there once in a while. I know you love Roy, Ollie. Try to show him that."

Before Oliver could answer, an anesthesiologist and a critical care nurse entered the room and announced that the detox process was finished and they were going to awaken Roy. Dinah took the chair as Oliver pulled up another. The couple watched carefully as the anesthesiologist and nurse worked together to bring Roy to consciousness, which included disconnecting him from his ventilator when he had come up out of sedation enough to breath on his own.

Approximately 30 minutes after the anesthesiologist and nurse left, Roy started to groan softly. Dinah responded by leaning towards the teen and brushing back his red locks from his face. "Roy?" she asked softly, keeping her hand just above Roy's hairline. "Come on, kid, wake up." Not taking her eyes off Roy, she raised her voice slightly and addressed Oliver, "Ollie, get the doctor." Ollie obeyed, returning shortly with the critical care nurse.

By the time they returned, Roy had opened his eyes, and was trying to speak. The nurse went to the other side of Roy's bed and hushed him. She said, "Roy, you have a tube down your throat. When I count to three, I want you to blow out like you're blowing out candles, ok?"

With frightened eyes, Roy looked at the nurse and nodded. "One...two...three." The nurse pulled the tube and Roy blew out as instructed, coughing violently after the tube was out.

Roy opened his eyes and looked unfocusedly at Dinah. "Dinah?" he called softly, "Ollie? Is it over?"

"The first part is, hon," Dinah responded gently. "As soon as you wake up enough, the doctors want you to take a walk, ok?"

"Hmm" Roy answered weakly, "After I take a nap, ok? Is Ollie here?" The power of a son's love, Dinah thought. Oliver has done nothing but ignore the boy, and Roy still was looking for him. Dinah looked expectedly at her partner.

Returning Dinah's glance with a bit of a glare, Ollie switched his gaze to Roy, and said, "I'm right here, son. Just get well, ok?"

"Yeah," Roy had closed his eyes again, but responded with a smile, "No problem."

After a moment of tweaking knobs and jotting notes, the nurse left the room. The nurse returned with a doctor whom Dinah hadn't met and they talked between themselves, with the nurse pointing at monitors as if to illustrate a point.

"Is there something wrong?" Oliver asked worriedly.

"Well, no," the doctor started. "Are you Roy's parents?"

"As close as he's got," Ollie answered. He was impatient and concerned. He wished the doctor would just tell him what was wrong with his son.

"Well, it's probably nothing, but Roy's blood pressure is pretty low, and he has a slight fever. Since we're all fairly new at this procedure, I'd like to recommend that Roy stay with us overnight. I think Dr. Heberlein would agree."

"Sure," Dinah spoke up before Oliver could. She was sure he'd agree, but sometimes he got a macho streak going, and she didn't want to take the chance, "Whatever you think is best."

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Later that day Oliver and Dinah left when Hal arrived. With Hal's help, Roy took the walk that Dinah had mentioned, moving slowly. He had gotten to the lounge, his prescribed destination, when his knees folded under him and he was forced to try to catch himself. Hal did catch him just as his knees touched the ground, and lifted him enough to help him sit. He gave Roy a quick lookover to make sure nothing was obviously seriously wrong, and went to retrieve the doctor. He came back with Dr. Heberlein. After giving Roy another quick exam, looking into his eyes and asking him his name, the doctor assured him that it was Roy's low blood pressure that caused his faintness. "It's nothing to worry about," he assured, "You'll feel much stronger tomorrow." He retrieved a wheelchair and escorted Hal and Roy back to Roy's room, helping Roy to settle back into bed.

That had been earlier that evening, and it was now around midnight. Hal had long since gone home, and Roy had managed to fall into a sick, fitful sleep with the help of the sedation medication he had been given.

The handle to the outside window of Roy's room slowly turned unobserved, and the window opened, allowing an unauthorized visitor. Robin had heard how sick his friend had been, and although he was concerned for Roy physically, this night he was more concerned for his friend's emotional health. He softly landed on the floor and listened--the hallway was hospital-quiet; with only the soft whispers of the night staff at the nurses' station. The room was dark except for the eerie glow from the hallway light that seeped from the ajar door, and Robin moved silently to stand over his friend.

He was glad to see that Roy was asleep, although the sleep was not peaceful; Roy was moaning softly and was moving agitatedly in his sleep. Robin pulled a chair to his friend's bedside so that he was facing the ajar door and prepared for the night's vigil.

Robin had been in the room for about 2 hours, and had slipped into a very light sleep when Roy awoke screaming, "No!! Ollie!! NO!!!"

Robin awoke immediately and reached out into the dark for Roy. He found Roy's shoulders, and started calming tones, "Shhh, Roy. You're safe. Shhh..." Roy had calmed enough to try to figure out his surroundings. He was twisted in his sheets, and sweating profusely, but he wasn't sure if the sweat was from the nightmare or from being ill.

Robin listened. He didn't hear any indication that his friend's frightened shouts alerted the night staff, although if he had been discovered, it would be ok. Roy's dual identity was public, so that the staff knew he was a member of the Teen Titans, and it would only make sense to find the leader of the Titans watching over his teammate. Roy felt disoriented and confused, "Dick? Where am I?"

"You're in the hospital. Remember Dinah thought you should stay here overnight? And it's Robin." Robin didn't blame Roy for using his name. He realized how disoriented his friend was, and it was too dark for Roy to see that he was in costume.

Roy flopped back down on his back as Robin released his grip to allow the motion, and didn't bother to untangle himself. Roy's quick motion immediately produced a relentless coughing, and Robin helped him to sit up again. He found a glass of water and placed it at Roy's lips which Roy took gratefully. His coughing stopped, and Roy eased himself back onto the bed with Robin's help. Still sitting on the edge of the bed, Robin could tell Roy was in tears by his voice when he spoke, "I made him take me, Dick. I found him, and I made him take me."

Knowing how upset his friend was, Dick let Roy's use of his name slide again. He just hoped no one was listening. Wondering what kind of nightmare Roy had to make him say that, Robin said, "Made who take you?" Robin already knew, but he felt that Roy needed to say it.

"Ollie. I just showed up one day and convinced him that he needed a partner. I found him. Not like when Bruce found you. He never did want me." Roy's voice cracked. Through the dim light, Robin saw Roy slowly curl up into a fetal position, as if it ached to do so. Roy was on his side, hugging himself, and his head was tucked so Robin couldn't see his face. Robin could never remember a time when his friend looked so young and vulnerable.

Robin was at a loss for words, and before he could say anything, Roy started to speak, his voice muffled. "God, I really screwed up," he said into his chest. He straightened his neck so that his head was resting on his pillow, and continued, "You wouldn't believe the things I did to get what I needed." Robin didn't respond, knowing that his friend knew he was listening, and allowing Roy to continue. "I've stolen things. Both from people I know and from strangers. And Iâ€¦ sold myselfâ€¦ to get what I needed." Robin was glad for the darkness; he didn't have to control his reaction to Roy's confessions.

Oh, God, his mind whirled, That definitely brings AIDS into the picture. He didn't dare think beyond the stoic puzzle-solving detective mode.

Roy continued, "But now, all I can think about is the bow I sold. It was the one Brave Bow gave me before he died--probably the most important thing I ever owned, and it's gone." That pit that had been inhabiting Robin's stomach during the last month or two started to spread over him; he knew that bow was Roy's greatest treasure.

Robin answered quietly, "Maybe when you get well we can find it. We've gotten pretty good at finding things in the past few years."

"Yeah, maybe," Roy didn't sound very hopeful.

Sensing that Roy was done talking, Robin said, "Try to get some more sleep, ok? You still have a few hours."

"Yeah, ok." Robin returned to his chair, and Roy slowly stretched out onto his back. Once Roy's coughing became slow and steady breathing, Robin returned to his own light sleep.

The next time Robin awoke, it was dawn and Roy was sleeping on his good side, with his back towards Robin, and with slightly labored breathing. Not moving from the laid-back position he was in, Robin looked to see why he woke. He saw Oliver Queen standing in the doorway watching Roy, and a chill went down his spine. He sat up and faced the archer. He was taught to have only respect for his elders, but he felt his eyes narrowing. Without getting out of his chair, Robin said, "What can I do for you, Mr. Queen?"

Aware of Robin's demeanor and ignoring it, Oliver shifted his attention to Robin and said, "I've come to check on Roy. I'll take over. I'm sure you're anxious to get home."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Queen. I promised Roy that I would be here for him when he wakes up, and I don't intend to break that promise." Robin heard his voice start to drip with contempt, but he couldn't stop it even if he wanted to.

"Robin, Roy is still my son, and I will relieve you."

Oliver's aggression was enough to push Robin over the edge, and he stood up and walked around the bed angrily to stand toe to toe with the archer. Robin was almost as tall as his elder. His voice was dangerously quiet, "Was he your son a week ago when he got shot? How about the last four months when he had to look to heroin for comfort? Roy's been through hell and back, Mr. Queen, and I blame you. Do you know he sold the bow that Brave Bow gave to him?" Robin could tell by Oliver's stunned expression that he hadn't known.

Oliver was about to answer Robin's accusations when they both heard Roy's soft voice, "Robin, it's ok."

Robin looked to his friend to see him lying in the same position in which he had been asleep a moment ago and watching the argument. He wondered how much of his tirade Roy had heard. Oliver glared at Robin and went to Roy's bedside. "How are you doing, son?"

Roy sat up and shrugged. After a cough, he admitted, "Not bad. Not ready to jump through hoops though." Initially looking into his lap, he glanced up to give a small smile to his guardian, but Robin could see the guarded caution in his friend's eyes.

Robin stepped back to give the pair a bit of privacy. He took a casual stance, leaning with one shoulder on the wall by the door and arms folded, although his blue hawklike eyes, tense muscles, and angry demeanor betrayed his alertness. He wasn't about to leave Roy alone with Oliver. Looking in the pair's direction, Robin caught eye contact with Roy. His friend gave him a small smile, as if to say he recognized Robin's protectiveness and appreciated it.

Oliver sat in Robin's chair and started, "I'm sorry I wasn't here for you, Roy. It will be different from now on, I promise."

Roy's uncertain mood turned to anger and he raised his voice, "I seem to remember hearing that a lot in the past few years, Ollie. I've barely even seen you in the past month! If you didn't want me, why did you take me?!" His anger turned to unbidden tears which he wiped away exasperatedly.

Oliver's own anger became rekindled, and, although he tried to control his anger at first, he ended up yelling, "Because I couldn't leave you on the street! I don't know how to take care of a kid! I've done the best I know how. I'm sorry it wasn't good enough for you!" He heard the words come out, and was instantly sorry. He would have given the world to take them back.

At those last words, Robin straightened his stance and unfolded his arms, ready to move towards the pair. Obviously hurt, Roy's tears came uninvited, and he flopped back down on his side, turning his back on the elder archer, despite the movement placing him on his sore shoulder. In response to Roy's action, Oliver stood up, threw his hands at his ward, and tried to stalk out of the room.

His way was blocked by a nurse entering the room. "\*What\* is going on here?" She demanded, "This is a hospital, you know," She glared at Oliver, and softened her glare just a bit before looking at Roy who had turned onto his back at her entrance. She laid eyes on Robin--she hadn't seen him right away because Oliver had been blocking her



view--and tsked. She said, "What is this, a circus?"

Robin looked at her, amused. Well she's not impressed. he thought to himself. Wonder if she knows how much I resemble her comment. He spoke up, "No, ma'am, I'm just here to look in on my teammate."

"Uh huh. And that requires shouting and yelling?"

"No, ma'am. I'm sorry about that." Robin wasn't about to protest that he hadn't been yelling. He was always taught to fight only battles that he could win.

"Well the three of you keep it down." She wagged her finger at the 3 heroes and left, leaving the door ajar.

Oliver and Roy locked in eye contact for a moment, each speaking a sprinkling of amusement and volumes of hurt. Finally Oliver broke the contact and said, "I have to go. I'll see ya later, kid." He actually sounded like he meant it, Robin thought. Oliver left the room, giving Robin a curt nod as he passed the costumed teen.

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Later that day Roy was discharged from the hospital and returned with Dinah to her apartment. Having been told when they would return, Hal was waiting for them. Roy looked a lot better than he did yesterday, so Dinah and Hal sat Roy down with news that they were going to go over the plan for his continued recovery. The result was a pouting and angry teen sitting on the couch with his arms crossed and trying to ignore his runny nose.

He still didn't feel well, but he felt a whole lot better than he did yesterday. And he felt as though life were flowing back into him by the hour. The last thing he wanted was to spend his rediscovered life in Dinah's living room being reminded of all the things that hurt.

Dinah was sitting across from him in a chair, and Hal was seated on the couch next to the young archer. Dinah looked disapprovingly at Roy's attitude and started, "You know, Roy, this would go a whole lot easier if you were a willing participant."

Roy raised his glaring eyes, angrily wiped his nose on his sleeve, and retorted, "I've got it under control. I'm not going back to smack."

Hal spoke up, "You're adamant about that now, Roy. But its not going to be that easy. Detox isn't going to fix all your problems, just your physical ones. Do you think you'll remember when you're faced with the same problems you had before?"

Roy tightened his folded arms, his shoulder's protests visible only in a quick wince, and glared even harder at the floor. Dinah quietly said to him, "Dick told me what happened between you and Oliver this morning, Roy. Know this. That if it doesn't work out between you and he, and I hope it does, you will always have a place to stay. Already Bruce Wayne has offered you a home, and you're always welcome here."

Still glaring at the floor, Roy mumbled, "I don't want to be a

bother. I can take care of myself."

"You're not a bother Roy. " Dinah pleaded, "Please don't think you are. You have people who care for you, and we're trying to help you. And you certainly know its not a bother for Bruce to give you a home. Besides, I think we've established that you can't take care of yourself. At least not yet. What do you think?"

Roy lifted his angry eyes, raised his voice, and said, "I think I've been given no choice. Everyone I try to get close to leaves me. It's not my fault."

"Ok, Roy," Hal started patiently, pulling out a tape recorder, "This is an exercise that Bruce suggested. I want you to think about all the people and things that make up your life. We're going to make a tape, so if you forget why life is worthwhile, you can listen to it."

"What, just name people? What good is that?" Roy's irate eyes went to Hal.

Hal sighed, trying to stay calm at Roy's attack. "The good, Roy, is that our lives are made up of the people we know and things we do. If you think of those people and things, you'll be evaluating your life, and hopefully we can start to get to the bottom of why you turned to drugs."

"I turned to drugs for something to do while I waited for Ollie to come home," Roy said angrily, relenting to an escaped series of coughs.

"Ok," Hal's voice strained under the effort of patience. "Then Ollie is a main figure in your life. Why don't you tell us how you feel about him?"

Roy thought for a moment. "Well he's my guardian." He said matter-of-factly, "Closest thing I have to a parent. He makes me feel...well it depends I guess." Roy eyes went to the floor as he tried to puzzle his thoughts into words. "When we're working together, it's the greatest feeling in the world. And every time I shoot my bow, it's a feeling of power. I know the arrow is going to hit its target. Well at least I did until a few weeks ago.

"But when we're not working. And he..leaves. It just makes me feel so...worthless.. Why can't he take me along? I mean, I know I have school, but I know other kids learn on the road, why can't I? I don't know any other kid who has to worry about things like grocery shopping and rent payments."

Hal suggested, "Taking you along isn't a bad idea, Roy. Have you ever asked him? I wouldn't be surprised if it never occurred to him to take you."

"Naw, I never asked. I don't think he wants me." Roy said, looking at the floor.

Dinah leaned forward quickly, trying to make eye contact with the teen, "Look at me, Roy," she waited until he looked up into her eyes, and continued. "Ollie wants you, Roy. He loves you."

"Yeah, that's why he walked out this morning," Roy retorted.

Dinah sighed. "It's no excuse, Roy, but he doesn't know how to be a parent. He's afraid he'll screw up. And he feels responsible for your drug use. I think when he looks at you, he's so afraid of messing up that he messes up."

Roy looked at his surrogate mother for a moment, and looked away lost in thought. After a moment, Hal prompted, "Who else do you think is important to you?"

"No one's important to me." Roy insisted, "I've learned a long time ago to keep distance."

"Well," Dinah spoke up, "I think that's the root right there, Roy. Everyone needs other people to care about. We are social creatures. What about the Titans? How about Dick?"

His anger flaring, Roy started, "He's always trying to control things. And always showing off. He doesn't understand what I go through--he has nothing to worry about in that big house of his." Through his anger Roy instantly felt a pang of guilt. Dick has done nothing but help him in the past week, and here he was tearing him apart.

Roy felt Dinah's caring eyes bore into his soul. He looked up into her eyes and saw the glisten of unshed tears. He looked away. Dinah was glad Roy was angry now, because it his guard was down, and he told what was usually an underlying current. She said quietly, "Do you think he thinks you're showing off when you shoot a bullseye from 2000 feet, and then split that arrow twice?"

"No, of course not. That's just what I can do."

"Exactly. And leadership and acrobatics is just what Dick can do. It's what makes him a Titan just as your archery makes you one. I think Dick recognizes the strengths and differences in each of you and that it's those differences that make you a team. Being a Titan wouldn't be much fun if you could do what Dick can do, or if Dick was an expert archer, don't you think?"

"Yeah I guess. It's just that..I can't help comparing myself against him."

"I think that's a self-esteem problem, Roy." Dinah said whole-heartedly, "I wish with all my heart that I could show you what I see in you. A strong and very talented young man, who turns the head of any warm-blooded lady, but you have to see it for yourself. Bruce wants you to do some community service, and I think it's a good idea. Hopefully if you get down to basics, you'll see all the good you're capable of."

If it hadn't been shrouded in the compliment, Roy's reaction to Bruce's suggestion would have been anger. Instead he found himself fighting back tears, and looking sideways away from Hal to try to hide his tears from his elders.

Pretending not to notice Roy's tears, Hal continued, "Ok, what about the others? How about Donna?"

Roy's tearful expression warmed into a smile as he looked back to Dinah and Hal and said, "ahh...Donna. She's ...warmth.." Roy smiled to himself, "Donna. I could lose myself in her eyes. Every time I see her, it's like the room lights up."

"Do you have any problem with her having special abilities?" Hal asked.

Roy broke his love-sick daze and looked up at Hal "No, of course not," He said too quickly. Hal looked at him questioningly, and Roy sighed, "Well, ok. I guess I'd like it if she needed me more."

"She does need you, Roy," Dinah spoke up again. "Probably not in the way that you mean, but she was truly scared when she heard you were sick."

Roy thought on Dinah's words, digesting them. Dinah continued, "She can take care of herself, that's true. But she's just like any other girl in that she needs to be loved. And she looks to you for that, I've seen it." Dinah grinned as Roy blushed. "What about Wally and Garth?"

Roy shrugged. "They're nice. Wally and I have lots of fun getting in trouble together, and Garth is ok--even though he's a little weird sometimes."

Dinah and Hal nodded, and after it was apparent that Roy had nothing else to say on the Titans, Hal asked, "How about people in your past? People who might have influenced who you are today."

There was no hesitation when Roy said, "Brave Bow." He started to look downcast as he thought about his former guardian. "He taught me all I know about archery. He gave me a home, even though not everyone wanted me there on the reservation. He was the only person I ever felt I could make proud of me." Roy was lost in the past when his tears started to come. He wiped them away, and admitted quietly, "I..I...lost... the bow he gave me."

Hal spoke up before Roy had a chance to dwell on the lost bow. "I'm proud of you Roy. I'm proud of you because of the good you want to do. You use your archery to help people. I know that all the JLA members are proud of all the Titans, including you, and including Oliver. I'm proud of you for fighting your addiction. And I'm proud of you for facing your problems."

Roy blushed and allowed a small smile, looking at the floor. Dinah was about to say something when a knock came from the door. Dinah left the room to answer it, and shortly returned with Donna following behind. Dinah noticed Roy's eyes take a special glint when he saw his peer. "Hi, Roy," Donna smiled, "I came to take my favorite guy out for a date."

Dinah smiled at Roy's colored cheeks and said, "Well I think we were about done here. You remember what was said here, ok, Roy?"

Roy nodded sincerely, and got up from the couch. He moved to stand next to Donna who greeted him with a smile and hug. Donna looked into his eyes, and she could see a life behind them that she hadn't realized was missing. She smiled, "You look better today."

"Yeah," Roy mirrored her beaming smile. "I'm healing. Still got this 'cold' though. So what does my favorite girl got planned?" Roy wrapped his good arm around Donna's waist.

Donna giggled and blushed, embarrassed in front of the adults, and playfully pushed him away. She was glad to see his good mood; Dick had warned her that Roy might be surly. "I thought maybe some miniature golf. Up for that?"

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"Sweetheart, I'm up for anything you want to do," Roy gave her a killer smile.

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Donna drove to the course with Roy in the passenger's seat, and Roy felt more alive than he ever remembered. He supposed the talk he had had with Dinah and Hal had done some good, but he was just glad to be out of that apartment. He felt physically better than he had in a long time, even with his sore shoulder, runny nose, and occasional cough, and emotionally he was on air next to his favorite girl. Sitting crookedly in the seat with his right arm resting on the door, he found himself staring at Donna. He knew he shouldn't stare so, but he couldn't help himself; he felt giddy. Finally Donna looked over and said with a smile, "What?"

After being caught, Roy did break his daze, but he didn't stop looking at her and he said, "Nothing, sweetheart. I've just forgotten how beautiful you are."

"Roy!" Donna blushed furiously and, embarrassed, tried to hide her smile until Roy broke into a big grin.

The young couple reached the course, and went to pay and get their equipment. Laughing, Roy begged Donna to let him have the blue ball until she relented, laughing so hard that she was gasping for breath. They went to the first hole, and quoting the ladies-first rule, Roy insisted that Donna go first. "Oh, you're quite the gentleman, Mr. Harper," Donna cooed as she put her red ball on the tee.

The first hole was simple. It was a path with a ninety degree angle and a small hill after the hole. Donna hit her ball, and it followed a crooked course, stopping right before the end of the path. Roy grinned at his date, put his ball on the tee, and with very little warm-up hit his blue ball straight as an arrow into the target. Answering Donna's hand on hip and mock glare, Roy laughed and held his free hand up, "Hey, you chose this activity!" With a feigned huff, Donna finished the hole, and they continued.

As they continued, Roy tried to make his skill not so obvious, and Donna suspected that he was pulling his punch, but she didn't say anything. She did start to cheat obviously though, claiming that she deserved to cheat. "Hey!" Roy protested as Donna, feigning innocence and looking away, kicked her ball closer to the hole.

"What?" Donna looked the picture of innocence, "The wind took it," she grinned.

"Uh huh," Roy returned a crooked grin.

On the fifteenth hole, Roy critiqued the technique of the larger-than-life statue of an archer. "See," Roy had a mock lecturing tone and pointed in the air towards the statue's bow arm, "His elbow shouldn't be locked, and he should hold the bow closer to his body." Donna responded with a playful backslap to Roy's chest, and Roy's eyes danced. He smiled warmly at Donna, and quickly stole a kiss on the cheek. Donna was taken by surprise, but responded with what was meant to be a quick kiss on the lips. But Roy caught her before she could pull away, releasing his golf club and wrapping his arms around her. The kiss was sweet, sweeter than Roy ever remembered. She echoed his action, putting one hand on his back, and reaching up with the other to be entangled in his copper-penny hair.

The kiss finally ended, and they smiled into each others eyes for a moment before breaking the embrace. Roy picked up both clubs, and returned them. They went to the snack bar. Donna ordered a cheeseburger, fries, and a milkshake, and although Roy would normally have echoed her order, his stomach was still a little queesy and he opted for a glass of water. They took a table in the corner. Roy's back was to the wall, and Donna faced him. Donna smiled at Roy, and started, "You look good, Roy. I'm glad you're in such a good mood. Dick thought you might not be."

"How could I not be?" Roy smiled, "I'm with my favorite person in the world, and besides a sore shoulder, which I'm told I have Bruce to thank for, and these cold symptoms, I feel great. I'm glad you'll still be with me."

"Still be with you? Why wouldn't I be?" Donna looked puzzled and concerned.

Roy shrugged, his mood taking a downward stride, and looking into his water said, "I dunno. Because of..what..you know..what I've done."

"I don't care about that, Roy," Donna said sincerely, "Well, I mean I do care, but I feel responsible. I should have done more with you so you didn't feel so lonely when Ollie left."

Roy's tone turned urgent, "No, Donna. Don't ever blame yourself for what I did. I'd like to blame someone..like Ollie, but it was only my fault."

Donna nodded and blushed. It was hard to talk about this, but she had to get it out. "We all feel like we should have done something." Roy understood that she meant the Titans. "If you ever need anything, Roy, you tell one of us, ok?"

"Sure thing, princess. I'll remember." He smiled.

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The young couple returned to the Titans lair to find that their 3 teammates had set up for a party. "Roy's here!" they heard Wally's voice. He came to them as a streak and a breeze and apologized, "Sorry, Donna, I didn't mean to ignore you." Roy noticed that he was out of costume. Wally actually stopped a moment and looked at his archer friend. Roy saw sadness in his friend's eyes and thought he looked like he was trying to figure out how to say something when finally he simply said, "I'm sorry."

"For what, Fleetfeet?" Roy asked.

Wally looked at Donna and then at the floor. "I'm just..sorry. Maybe later I'll tell you what for." As if suddenly remembering that he was supposed to be hosting a party, Wally perked up. He started to tug at their sleeves, "In here, in here." He lead them to the main common room of the Lair, and they were greeted with beaming faces and a banner that said, "Welcome back, Speedy"

"Hi, guys," Roy grinned at his teammates. He looked at the banner and said, "Thanks, guys, this is great." He turned to Donna, "Were you in on this, sweetheart?" Beaming, Donna nodded.

"Time to get this party underway!" Wally declared as he passed out a can of soda to each of his friends. He knew just what they all wanted; Sprite for Garth, Coke for Dick and Roy, and Diet Coke for Donna, and he took a root beer for himself. "We got a movie to watch," he explained to Roy. "'Clash of the Titans'" he grinned.

"My favorite part is when the Cracken goes after the maiden," Garth offered, grinning. The others laughed jovially.

"I've got the popcorn!" Dick announced. Everyone settled into their seats, with Donna cuddled next to Roy. Just as Wally was about to start the tape, the bell indicating a visitor sounded and they all let out a collective groan. They were all out of costume so Dick said, "Wally, go change and answer the door." It was unspoken that Titan in costume should answer the door, even if his dual id were public, and he should send them away if it was anyone that didn't know Dick's secret.

A short breeze later, Kid Flash returned to the room looking sheepish. Dick was about to ask what was wrong when he saw Green Arrow--in costume--behind his teammate. Dick stood up and took a defensive stance, causing the others to turn around. When Roy saw his guardian, he also stood with a question plain across his face. Dick took a step towards his elder and started, "Green Arrow, I don't think this .."

Green Arrow cut him off, waving an oddly shaped brown-wrapped package, "Relax, kid. I'm not here to start any fights." He gave Dick a look that indicated that he didn't want to participate in any right now either.

"Well then, what can we do for you?" Dick asked, looking for Roy's reaction. Roy still stood not too sure of himself, looking halfway between his guardian and the floor.

"I brought this," he held out the package, "for Roy." Roy took the package from Green Arrow and looked puzzled at his guardian. He could tell now that he was holding it that it was a longbow. He brow furrowed--he already had a perfectly fine bow. He slowly unwrapped the package and collapsed back onto the couch as he realized what he held.

He had Brave Bow's longbow back.

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file.